

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 PC-01 OES-06 SY-05 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SIL-01
LAB-04 /076 W
----- 008989 /46

R 151120Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 451

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 12396

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINR PINT IR
SUBJ: ANNUAL STUDENT BROUHAHA: WIDESPREAD BUT LESS VIOLENT

REF A. 74 TEHRAN A-187 B. 75 TEHRAN 10865 C. TEHRAN 10912

SUMMARY: ANNUAL STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS ON 16TH OF AZAR (DECEMBER 7)
WERE SOMEWHAT MORE ORDERLY THIS YEAR, BUT PERHAPS MORE WIDESPREAD.
STUDENT DISCONTENT FOCUSED ON GOI SUPPORT POLICIES, FEES AND LOANS,
AND DORMITORY AND FOOD CONDITIONS, THOUGH SOME POLITICAL SLOGANS
WERE IN EVIDENCE. MOST UNIVERSITIES ARE OPEN AGAIN. END SUMMARY.

1. FROM NUMBER OF ACADEMIC SOURCES, MISSION HAS PIECED TOGETHER
REASONABLY COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF STUDENT DISTURBANCES DURING
PRESENT YEAR CULMINATING IN TRADITIONAL DEMONSTRATIONS ON 16TH OF AZA
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(FOR BACKGROUND, SEE REF A). LOCAL OBSERVERS FOR WHAT HAS BY NOW
BECOME ANNUAL, ALMOST KNEE JERK, RITUAL (REF B) FEEL DEMONSTRATIONS
THIS YEAR WERE MORE WIDESPREAD, LESS DIRECTLY POLITICAL THAN IN PAST,
AND MORE INTELLIGENTLY MANAGED BY UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS.

2. SEQUENCE BEGAN ABOUT FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER WHEN REVISED GOI
FEE AND LOAN POLICIES CUT BACK SUPPORT FOR SOME STUDENTS (REF C)
AND NEARLY ALL UNIVERSITIES SAW STUDENT STRIKES. THESE PETERED OUT
WITHIN FEW DAYS, BUT TEHRAN UNIVERSITY ENGINEERING FACULTY STAYED
CLOSED, AND ARYAMEHR UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN ONLY INTERMITTENTLY OPEN
SINCE THEN.

3. ABOUT NOVEMBER 20, STUDENTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY STRUCK
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BRIEFLY IN SYMPATHY WITH IRANIAN STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS ABROAD IN

HOUSTON AND PARIS, AND IN PREPARATION FOR DECEMBER 7 "CELEBRATION." KILLING OF IRANIAN CULTURAL ATTACHE IN PARIS ABOUT THE SAME TIME MAY HAVE ALSO STIMULATED DISSIDENTS. STUDENT ATTENDANCE CAME BACK UP AT MOST PLACES, BUT ARYAMEHR WAS OFFICIALLY CLOSED DECEMBER 1, AND ALL MAJOR TEHRAN UNIVERSITIES WERE EMPTY IF NOT CLOSED (EXCEPT FOR EVENING CLASSES, WHICH PROCEEDED NORMALLY THROUGH THE ENTIRE PERIOD) FROM DECEMBER 4-11. COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AT NARMAK NEAR TEHRAN HAS REMAINED CLOSED UNTIL PRESENT. DAMAVAND, PRIVATE GIRLS' COLLEGE, WAS NOT OFFICIALLY CLOSED, BUT TOOK "HOLIDAY" DECEMBER 6 AND 7. KARAJ AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE WAS CLOSED THREE DAYS BEGINNING DECEMBER 6. PAHLAVI UNIVERSITY IN SHIRAZ HAD DEMONSTRATION DECEMBER 6 WHICH WRECKED AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE LIBRARY THERE. U.S. CONSUL VISITING AHVAZ DECEMBER 7 WITNESSED PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION AT JENDI-SHAPOUR UNIVERSITY, BUT NO CLOSURE, THOUGH MOST STUDENTS AND FACULTY STAYED AWAY THAT DAY.

3. GOI APPARENTLY DECIDED TO REOPEN ALL SCHOOLS DECEMBER 11, EXCEPT COLLEGES OF ENGINEERING WHICH WILL REMAIN CLOSED FOR TWO ADDITIONAL WEEKS. MOTIVE FOR THIS IS TO PENALIZE ENGINEERING STUDENTS HALF-A-TERM'S CREDIT AND FORCE THEM TO GO TO SUMMER SCHOOL TO CATCH UP, THUS KEEPING THEM WORKING ALL SUMMER. TEHRAN UNIVERSITY ENGINEERS WILL LOSE WHOLE TERM, SINCE THEY WERE ALSO OUT ON STRIKE FOR SIGNIFICANT TIME IN OCTOBER PERIOD. COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WILL REMAIN CLOSED UNTIL END OF DECEMBER, THEN REOPEN WITH INTENSIVE SCREENING PROCESS FOR READMISSION. COLLEGE WILL RESCHEDULE FIRST AND SECOND TERMS TO PERMIT CREDIT TO BE EARNED FOR BOTH SEMESTERS UNDER "LOAD-AND-A-HALF" STUDY REQUIREMENTS FOR THOSE READMITTED. ENGINEERS SPECIALLY PENALIZED BECAUSE, AS IS TRADITIONALLY CASE IN IRAN, THEY WERE PRINCIPAL LEADERS OF DEMONSTRATIONS.

4. TEHRAN AND NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES SAW EXTENSIVE POLICE CORDON WEEK DECEMBER 4-11 WHICH MINIMIZED VIOLENCE AND CONTROLLED ACCESS TO CAMPUS. SITUATION AT NATIONAL TYPICAL OF MAJOR SCHOOLS: POLICE WERE PRESENT IN FORCE, BUT REMAINED OUT OF CLASSROOM BUILDING AND GENERALLY MORE UNOBTRUSIVE THAN IN PAST YEARS. REPORTS VARY AS TO HOW MUCH ACTUAL HEAD-KNOCKING TOOK PLACE, BUT ALL AGREE IT LESS THAN IN PAST TWO YEARS. FACULTY ESTIMATES OF STUDENT REACTION AT NATIONAL ALSO TYPICAL: THEY BELIEVE A FEW HARD-CORE LEADERS STIMULATE REST, WHO SIMPLY FOLLOW LEADER FOR REASONS VARYING

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FROM MILD INTEREST IN POLITICS TO SPIRIT THAT PROVOKES PANTY RAIDS IN OTHER COUNTRIES. GENERAL FEELING AMONG TEHRAN AND NATIONAL FACULTIES IS THAT EVEN HARD-CORE DISSIDENTS INCREASINGLY PREPARED TO PLAY BY ROUGH SET OF "RULES." SOURCES ALSO UNDERLINE FACT THAT EVEN WHERE UNIVERSITIES WERE TECHNICALLY "CLOSED" BY EITHER STUDENTS OR FACULTY, SOME CLASSES HELD, AND STUDENTS BY NO MEANS MONOLITHICALLY SUPPORTED DISSIDENTS. AVERAGE ABSENCE ON DECEMBER 6 OR 7 ESTIMATED AT 70 TO 80 PERCENT, DEPENDING ON

UNIVERSITY AND DAY.

5. COMMENT: MEDIA COVERAGE OF ABOVE EVENTS HAS BEEN NONEXISTENT. STORY OBTAINED PRIVATELY FROM GOI OFFICIALS, FACULTY MEMBERS, STUDENTS, OR ADMINISTRATORS INVOLVED. WHILE PUBLICLY STATED GOALS OF DISSENTERS RELATED TO FEES, FOOD, AND DORMITORY INADEQUACIES, SOME FACULTY MEMBERS WHO HAVE SIGNIFICANT STUDENT CONTACT FEEL ABSENCE OF APPARENT POLITICAL MOTIVATION WAS RESULT OF TACTICAL CHOICE OF RADICALS WHO HAVE POLITICAL GOALS BUT PREFER TO AVOID GIVING GOI EXCUSE TO BRING IN HEAVY SECURITY REINFORCEMENTS. AT LEAST SOME STUDENTS AGREE. BEHAVIOR OF POLICE THIS YEAR NOT AS EXTENSIVELY CRITICIZED BY FACULTY AS IN PAST, BUT AS ONE PROFESSOR SAID, "PERHAPS WE ARE JUST GETTING MORE ACCUSTOMED TO OUR ANNUAL DECEMBER INVASIONS." ALMOST ALL FACULTY MEMBERS AGREE ADMINISTRATION OF UNIVERSITIES CAN BE IMPROVED, BUT EXISTENCE OF MORE OR LESS PERMANENT RADICAL FACTIONS ON CAMPUS IN IRANIAN CONTEXT MEANS TRADITIONAL ANTI-WHATEVER FEELINGS WILL CONTINUE. IN THIS PERSPECTIVE, 16TH OF AZAR DEMONSTRATIONS AND REGULATED STUDENT STRIKES

REPRESENT USEFUL AND PERHAPS NECESSARY SAFETY VALVE FOR TENSION AND FRUSTRATIONS CREATED BY EXTENSIVE DEMANDS ON STUDENTS IN RAPIDLY-DEVELOPING SOCIETY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TEHRAN12396
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760461-1081
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761239/aaaabhoi.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 74 TEHRAN A-187
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <12 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANNUAL STUDENT BROUHAHA: WIDESPREAD BUT LESS VIOLENT
TAGS: PINR, PINT, IR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006